

California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley

Overview Report

for the

Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group

I. Introduction

A skilled workforce is the cornerstone of competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy. In the “old economy” regions prospered by simply having a large number of jobs and workers in low-wage positions. In the knowledge economy, regions prosper if their workers have honed their intellectual skills and are capable of being employed in the knowledge-based, information-intense jobs that are driving the “new economy.” Moreover, because the growth in knowledge-based jobs in the United States is increasing (from 27% of the total U.S. workforce in 1983 to 33% by 2006) regions which are successful in developing a workforce that can support such demand from industry will advance, while less competitive regions will continue to fall behind¹. While college graduates are critical to a knowledge based economy, not all knowledge workers are or need be college graduates. For those who do not complete college, vocational training geared to 21st century needs is critical.

The complete interdependency between a skilled workforce and prosperity in the digital economy is documented in numerous reports by such entities as the U.S Department of Commerce, U.S. Office of Technology Policy, U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Milken Institute, the Council on Competitiveness, CEOs for Cities, and many others. To put it bluntly using the words of one Kansas City economic developer, “The region with the smart people wins!”

The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley has been directed by Governor Schwarzenegger to focus on improving the economic vitality of the region, a goal which cannot be achieved without major emphasis on development of the Valley’s current and emerging workforce.

II. Summary of Key Findings in Base Reports

To provide some basic information to help frame the discussion for the Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group, several reports were reviewed, including:

- “Student and School Indicators for Youth in California’s Central Valley” (2002), Public Policy Institute of California;
- “Central Valley Report Card: Status Report on the Pathway to Higher Education in the Central Valley” (Fall 2002), Central Valley Higher Education Consortium; and
- “Good Medicine: Making Health Services an Economic Priority for the San Joaquin Valley” (December 2003), Great Valley Center.

Key findings from these reports are summarized below. However, it is important to note that unlike many of the other Partnership Work Group areas which have been the focus of many reports and surveys, there is strikingly little comprehensive, integrated information about the state of the

¹ The Metropolitan New Economy Index, April 2001, Progressive Policy Institute, www.neweconomyindex.org

region's workforce and its education and training systems. Rather, pockets of information exist across numerous agencies and within independent institutions. Through the network of agencies and institutions participating in the Partnership, more complete data can be assembled.

A. **California's Central Valley is a rapidly growing region that has become increasingly diverse with time.** It is important to understand the region's diversity, because research has shown a close relationship between student demographics and academic achievement. The following data "snapshots" provide information on the size of enrollment growth in the Valley over a 10-year period, the ethnic demographics for Valley students in 2000, and the percentage of students receiving free or reduced price meals in the Valley from 1999 to 2005.

K-12 Student Enrollment Counts

Source: California Basic Educational Data System as reported by PPIC

	1990	1995	2000	% Growth 1990 to 2000
North San Joaquin Valley²	216,277	242,656	271,241	25.4%
South San Joaquin Valley³	387,185	436,502	464,906	20.1%
Rest of State	3,982,466	4,379,796	4,865,791	22.2%

K-12 Student Demographics for 2000

Source: "Student and School Indicators for Youth in California's Central Valley," PPIC

	North San Joaquin Valley	South San Joaquin Valley	Rest of State
Public school enrollment	271,241	464,906	4,865,791
Race/Ethnicity			
% Asian	11.9%	7.1%	11.4%
% Black	6.5%	5.9%	8.8%
% Hispanic	39.2%	51.8%	44.9%
% White	40.7%	33.9%	33.6%
% Other	1.8%	1.3%	1.3%
% English Learners	22.5%	21.3%	26.2%

Percentage of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Price Meals

Source: California Department of Education, Data Quest

County	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Fresno	55.8	61.9	62.6	64.2	65.3	66.3
Kern	56.9	57.8	59.3	60.2	60.0	62.1
Kings	53.6	55.9	55.8	57.5	58.8	62.6
Madera	61.4	61.0	62.3	62.8	62.7	63.9
Merced	72.2	69.6	68.9	67.5	66.7	66.7
San Joaquin	47.4	46.5	44.1	47.5	47.1	46.0
Stanislaus	48.8	47.2	47.0	49.6	50.7	52.4
Tulare	62.8	65.0	65.7	65.6	68.1	66.5
Statewide	47.3	46.8	47.1	48.7	49.0	49.7

² North San Joaquin Valley = Merced, San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties

³ South San Joaquin Valley = Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera and Tulare Counties

B. The education gap is significant between the San Joaquin Valley and the rest of the state. According to the U.S. Census, only 15% of the adult population (i.e. over 25 years old) in the Valley has a bachelor's degree compared to 28% statewide.

C. Valley students are less likely to be prepared for college⁴: When compared with students state-wide, students from the San Joaquin Valley:

- Enroll in intermediate algebra during junior high at a slightly lower rate;
- Are less likely to complete college prep ("A-G") course requirements;
- Are significantly less likely to take the SAT during 12th grade and earn a lower average combined score;
- Graduate from high school at a slightly lower rate; and
- Are slightly less likely to pass the Mathematics and English Language Arts portions of the California High School Exit Exam.

D. Valley students do not take advantage of available resources to attend college⁵: Only 28% of students in the San Joaquin Valley region who qualify for Cal Grants submit an application. When compared with students state-wide, graduating high school seniors are:

- More likely to enroll at a community college;
- Equally likely to enroll at a CSU campus; and
- Less likely to attend a UC campus.

E. Training for occupations in the health services industry represents both a challenge for the Valley, as well as an opportunity: As one of the region's fastest growing sectors, the health services industry provides substantial economic opportunity for the region. However, like other regions throughout the United States, there is a tremendous shortage of qualified applicants in the San Joaquin Valley for available jobs in the industry. Without a region-wide, concerted effort to educate and train workers for health services occupations, the health services industry will either grow elsewhere or import talent to fill available positions.⁶

III. Proposed Goals

Consistent with Governor Schwarzenegger's executive order, the ultimate measure of success of the California Partnership and its Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group is sustained, long-term economic vitality in the San Joaquin Valley. Any number of worthwhile efforts could be pursued to achieve that end. However, to take advantage of the opportunity created by Governor Schwarzenegger's executive order, the Work Group must focus on the areas with immediate opportunities that can also lead to the greatest, long-term benefit for the region. The following goals are proposed for the Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group:

⁴ Source: Public Policy Institute of California and Data Quest as reported by the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium's "Central Valley Report Card," Fall 2002

⁵ "Central Valley Report Card: Status Report on the Pathway to Higher Education in the Central Valley," Central Valley Higher Education Consortium, Fall 2002

⁶ "Good Medicine: Making Health Services and Economic Priority for the San Joaquin Valley," Great Valley Center, December 2003

- **Expand vocational training capacity;**
- **Improve effectiveness and efficiencies of local workforce investment agencies;**
- **Increase college degree attainment;**
- **Close gaps in accessibility of baccalaureate education; and**
- **Establish the San Joaquin Valley as the state's leading producer of the full spectrum of health services professionals from entry level to physicians.**
- **Align curriculum between the K-12 system and higher education and training to insure pathways for success.**

IV. Proposed Scope of Work for the Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group

A. Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group Members – The major stakeholders for this work group include public and private four-year institutions, public and private two-year institutions, workforce investment board leaders, state agencies, the Department of Labor, and private sector champions. To the greatest extent possible, the Work Group members will identify and work with existing efforts in the Valley in order to move quickly and have the most impact on the region. For example, the public and non-profit private two- and four-year colleges and universities in the region have already established the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium that is focused on improving college-going behavior in the region (see list of higher education institutions in the attachment). Also, the directors of the workforce investment boards in the 8-county region have an established network and meeting schedule.

B. Interdependence of Work Groups – The issues and opportunities being addressed by the Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group are independent with several of the other Partnership Work Groups, most notably K-12 Education, Health and Human Services, and Economic Development. Communication and coordination with other Work Groups will be essential to the overall success of the Partnership.

C. Proposed Action Steps for Each Goal Area - Since regions across the country are facing similar challenges, a nationwide search for successful models is suggested as a preliminary step followed by additional issue framing steps described below. The action steps are designed to be a “straw man” only and should be modified and expanded as the Partnership and Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group members see fit.

- **Vocational Training** – Work with the community college system, industry leaders, local workforce investment boards, and state agencies to develop a comprehensive plan to expand the region's vocational training capacity in high-priority programs (i.e. high-demand occupations with living wages and “career ladders” that meet employer needs). Work with Valley legislators to identify and remove legislative barriers to the efficient and effective expansion of vocational training capacity. Develop and implement pilot projects that can be used as demonstrations for the rest of the state to quickly accelerate the availability of vocational training programs.
- **Local Workforce Investment Agencies** – Work with state agencies, the California Workforce Investment Board, the Department of Labor and the local workforce

investment boards in the region to identify system bottlenecks and inefficiencies that are significantly restricting workforce development efforts, including standards for training providers; develop creative strategies to resolve those issues and improve overall effectiveness.

- **College Degree Attainment Rates** – Leverage the work of the Central Valley Higher Education Consortium and its participating institutions to develop a college-going culture in the San Joaquin Valley.
- **Access to Baccalaureate Education** – Identify gaps in access to baccalaureate education in underserved parts of the region. Conduct market assessments to determine the true need for expanded baccalaureate programs. Work with education, industry and state agencies to develop creative plans to fill the gaps, including maximum leverage of distance learning opportunities.
- **Health Services and Medical Education** - Create a consensus with area stakeholders and state agencies around a comprehensive, integrated strategy (addressing vocational, undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate training and education) to meet the healthcare worker shortage in the region.

V. Proposed Stakeholders – The following is a starter list of organizations that are natural participants in the Higher Education and Workforce Development Work Group.

- California community colleges
- California State University campuses – Bakersfield, Fresno, Stanislaus
- University of California, Merced
- University of the Pacific
- Fresno Pacific University
- Local workforce investment agencies
- California Workforce Investment Board
- California Labor and Workforce Development Agency
- California Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Labor
- Business and industry associations

VI. Publication References

- Student and School Indicators for Youth in California's Central Valley. 2002. Public Policy Institute of California.
- Central Valley Report Card: Status Report on the Pathway to Higher Education in the Central Valley. Fall 2002. Central Valley Higher Education Consortium.
- Good Medicine: Making Health Services an Economic Priority for the San Joaquin Valley. December 2003. Published by the Great Valley Center. Prepared by Collaborative Economics with data and analytical support from The Milken Institute.